



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
POLICY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 28 JANUARY 2014
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor D Berry (Convener)
Councillor J Caldwell
Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor F McAllister
Councillor P MacKenzie
Councillor J Williamson
Councillor J Gillies

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson, Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Community Services
Mr R Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure
Mr I Patterson, Homelessness Manager
Ms C McCorry, Service Manager – Community Housing
Mr S Gibb, Contact Centre Manager
Ms E Morrison, Service Manager - Customer Service
Mr I Dalgleish, Service Manager – Transport
Mr P Vestri, Corporate Policy and Improvement Manager
Mr A Strickland, Policy Officer

Clerk:

Mrs F Stewart

Apologies:

Councillor P McLennan

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTE OF PPRC MEETING ON 26 NOVEMBER 2013

The Minute of the PPRC meeting on 26 November 2013 was agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

2. IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS

The Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Community Services, had submitted a report to update members on the impact of the changes in the homelessness legislation which were implemented on 31 December 2012.

Ian Patterson, Homelessness Manager, presented the report. He advised that the 4 stage homeless assessment had been reduced to 3 stages, with the removal of priority need. Younger single people who had previously been assessed as homeless but not in priority need, were now therefore assessed on the same basis as all other applicants. He reported that the demand for homelessness services had remained constant since 2008, with approximately 1600 applicants per year seeking assistance from the three services his team provides; Homeless Prevention, Response/Housing Options and Accommodation Services. Over the past 2 years, 90% of applicants had had previous accommodation in East Lothian. In April 2010, as part of the Council's strategy to react to the change in legislation in 2012, a Housing Options Service had been introduced. Mr Patterson outlined the Outcomes of this service and stressed that it was not mandatory for applicants to access this service but was operated on an 'opt in' basis. During 2011-12, the Homelessness Unit had accepted a housing responsibility for 550 applicants and, without the positive impact of the Options approach, it would have expected to accept a full re-housing responsibility for around 860 applicants per year.

Mr Patterson also outlined the future challenges for the Council as a result of the 2012 legislative changes and advised that the main financial implications of this legislation were the additional costs in relation to an increased use of B & B accommodation and an extended use of temporary accommodation.

Councillor Berry thanked Mr Patterson for his report and acknowledged that the Homelessness Team had a difficult job to do.

In response to a number of questions from Councillors, Mr Patterson clarified the role of each of the 3 services provided by the Homeless Team and advised that the Council was using more accommodation accessed through Registered Social Housing Landlords (RSLs). Mr Patterson also outlined the criteria for 'local connection' and advised that applications from those considered to be 'intentionally homeless' had increased to 15% at 31 December 2013. In relation to the completion of new houses, Mr Patterson advised that new homes had come on stream in North Berwick this year and others were due to be completed at Pinkie Braes in Musselburgh. Those would not, however, meet the demand for houses. Currently, there were 4,500 people on the waiting list.

The Chair enquired how many housing allocations failed after one year and Mr Patterson advised that the figure was less than 10%. His Team did not allocate homes outside the requested area and the East Lothian figure for sustained tenancies was well above the Scottish average.

Decision

The PPRC agreed to note the details of this report.

3. TRANSPORT/BUS SERVICES REVIEW

The Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Community Services, had submitted a report to provide the Committee with an opportunity to assess the utilisation of passenger carrying vehicles within the Council fleet. It also provided information on current supported public bus services within East Lothian and the hire of buses and taxis via the Transport Services Contract. Appendices 1 and 2 showed a breakdown of the transport services provided during the weeks beginning 18 November and 25 November 2013 respectively.

Ian Dalglish presented the report, giving a breakdown of the current subsidised bus service provision and advising that First Bus had returned all fully supported routes in April 2012. Internal transport provision, primarily to Adult Wellbeing and Education, was provided with a driver and escort (if required) via the Council's own fleet of 17 buses. Taxis were also used for transport between home and school for children with special needs and the Council was in discussion with NHS Lothian on providing non medical transfers. It had been calculated that, based on 7¼ hour days, utilisation over the complete fleet of Transport vehicles was mid 60%.'

Councillor Williamson enquired if there were figures available on the number of passengers using the subsidised bus services and Mr Dalglish advised that monthly passenger figures were available. However, as the Council supported only the evening services, statistics could be requested for the number of passengers per vehicle per hour to provide this specific information.

Councillor Goodfellow advised that many of his constituents were disappointed at the lack of integration between bus services and rail services. Ray Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure, replied that the Council could design a route with a specific number of stops at set times and invite quotations from bus companies. For over 20 years, the Council had carried out research on which routes were the most in demand, but the Council lacked information on what new services the public wanted. Mr Dalglish also provided further information to Councillor Goodfellow on the use of mini buses by Day Centres and Mr Montgomery explained to him the operation of school buses.

The Chair asked if vehicles could not carry out transfers to and from schools before and after Day Centre commitments and was advised by Mr Montgomery that this arrangement was already in place, where possible. The Chair also enquired if there were some hires, for example, play schemes, where buses were sitting idle for 3 hours. Mr Dalglish replied that, as fewer taxis were able to take wheelchairs, minibuses often had seats removed and were adapted to carry 10 passengers and 2 wheelchairs, limiting the service they could carry out elsewhere. He advised that, in future, more resource would be required to transfer these children.

Councillor Gillies considered that the subsidised bus service to and from Elphinstone could be improved and Mr Dalglish offered to meet with Councillor Gillies to discuss the matter further.

In response to a question by Councillor MacKenzie, the Chair advised that the Council had a 3% share holding in Lothian Buses as did Midlothian and West Lothian Councils. Monica Patterson, Depute Chief Executive, advised that the minority shareholders had Observer status on the Board of Lothian Buses and also had representation on a minority shareholder group.

Councillor Caldwell enquired what happened to buses between hires when they were used perhaps only 35% of the time. Mr Dalglish replied that vehicles were most in

demand between 8-10am, 12-1pm and 3-4 pm and it could be difficult to schedule additional journeys between those time slots.

The Chair stated the report had been very helpful, adding that the aim must be to minimise the waste by buses being underused. It was also important to have evidence that the service the Transportation unit was providing represented good value for money.

Action Point: The Chair requested a report on the business case for a supported bus programme, including the needs of Education.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the content of this report which formed a basis for discussion with regard to future utilisation of the Council passenger carrying fleet and external transport provision.

4. REVIEW OF VOICE RECOGNITION TELEPHONE SYSTEM

The Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Community Services, had submitted a report to advise of the performance of the Automated Telephony System used by East Lothian Council.

The report was presented by Eileen Morrison. She advised that the automated system, which was widely used by many other public sector organisations, had been implemented in January 2013 following a trial period. An important advantage of using this system was that it integrated with the Council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System which manages customer contact across the Council. Part of the new solution was the Netcall ContactPortal® which allows a caller to say the name of a person or service they wish to contact and the system connects them automatically. It was estimated that the ContactPortal® would handle approximately 80% of all switchboard traffic. The remainder of calls would be routed to the Contact Centre where a member of staff would provide assistance. For Quarter 3, October to December 2013, 86% of all calls to the Contact Centre were answered within 20 seconds. The response rate had improved as all members of staff in the Contact Centre were now trained to deal with switchboard calls and were able to log into calls which had not been possible with the previous system. Ms Morrison advised that the feedback had generally been positive and she had received very few complaints in relation to the service. The main benefit of the new system was that callers are getting through to staff directly without going through the switchboard. Staff and members of the public therefore needed to remember only one telephone number, 01620 827827.

Councillor Caldwell enquired if the new system would return a call to the switchboard if there was no response on the extension you had requested and therefore avoiding the need to redial. Stuart Gibb, Contact Centre Manager, advised that this was not technically possible but a caller can cancel the call or just say 'Operator' to be directed to the Contact Centre where a member of staff there can also assist with trying alternative extensions.

Councillor Berry noted that there was an Indicator for the number of calls answered within 20 seconds and asked if this was an acceptable target. Ms Morrison replied that 20 seconds was the national standard and the benchmarking figure was also 20

seconds. Councillor Berry was disappointed that 20 seconds was considered adequate as, in his view, callers expected business standards (3 rings).

Councillor Goodfellow reported that he had been happy with the new service.

Councillor McAllister advised that he had requested this report as he had had little success with the automated system. He also referred to the high level of sickness absence and the loss of three members of staff reported in the Performance Indicators for the Contact Centre and enquired as to whether these staff members were off with stress. Ms Morrison advised that the long term absences were related to chronic conditions which were not related to stress and two staff had retired and one had left the service. Over the past year, there had been a number of significant changes in the services provided by the Contact Centre and new staff had been recruited for each of the new services. These staff then needed to be trained and staff recruited to replace those who had been on long term absence and then retired/left.

The Chair noted that there had been a drop in the performance of the Contact Centre and enquired if it was a question of insufficient staff resource or inadequate training. Mr Gibb replied that there had been a substantial increase in the volume of calls, particularly for free uplifts, and that new members of staff had undergone training. However, it can take up to a year to train a Contact Centre assistant and recruitment was almost a continuous process as some staff moved on to other posts, mainly within the Contact Centre.

In response to further questions from Councillor McAllister, Ms Morrison outlined the cost of the new system and the expected savings for the Council.

The Chair enquired what the cost of the Contact Centre was and how many staff were employed there. Ms Morrison advised there was 34.5 equivalent staff, not including the systems and development team that supports it. The operating cost of the Contact Centre was just over £1 million but much of the cost was recharged to services on whose behalf call services were provided. The Centre accounted for 39% of the total Customer Services budget and included the 24 hour/365 Community response service.

Ms Patterson urged Members to speak to Mr Gibb if they experienced any difficulties with the automated system so that any problems could be resolved. Ms Morrison also invited any Members who had not yet visited the Contact Centre, to arrange a visit through Mr Gibb.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

5. Q2 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Community Services, had submitted a report to provide information regarding the performance of Council services during Q2 (July – September) 2013/14. The Indicators, shown by exception, were detailed in Appendix A.

Andrew Strickland, Policy Officer, presented the report. He advised that Members had reviewed the performance of the Council and raised several questions, including attendances at leisure centres, homelessness assessments and pupils' examination results. The responses to those questions were detailed in the report.

Councillor Goodfellow enquired if the figures for *enjoyleisure* were available on the Council's website and was advised by Andrew Strickland that they were.

The Chair referred to the Indicator for Housing Completions and asked if he could be informed of the 2012/13 target. He noted that the number of Council completions had decreased and was likely to fall further, and stated that it was for the Committee to establish the impact of that. Ms Patterson advised that, as with any new build development, it was difficult to anticipate a completion date. She added that, with a mixture of private sector, Council and RSLs, the number of completions had begun to rise.

Councillor MacKenzie was pleased to note the low number of child casualties. The Chair commented that the Council had appeared on the television news the previous night for closing roads around Haddington schools at peak times. He fully supported the idea to make the roads safer for children and had been pleased to hear the positive comments from local parents.

Finally, the Chair thanked Mr Strickland for his detailed and concise report.

Decision

The Committee used the information provided in this report to consider whether any aspect of the Council's performance is in need of improvement or further investigation.

6. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2014 UPDATE

Members referred to the Annual Work Programme update and Ms Patterson advised that it was not yet clear if the information would be available for the report entitled 'Review of Effectiveness of Council Investment in Police and Community Wardens' due to come to the March meeting.

The Chair advised that the next KPI Review for Councillors would take place at 2 pm in the Provost's Boardroom on Tuesday 25 February. This would be followed by the agenda setting meeting at 3pm.

(Post meeting note: The meetings above have since been rescheduled for 3pm and 4pm respectively.)

Signed

Councillor David Berry
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee